



FEMA

Embargoed for Release
3 a.m. EDT, Aug. 11, 2004
(OK for Aug. 11 newspapers)

Press Release

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NEW FIRE SAFETY CAMPAIGN AIMS TO REDUCE SENIORS' HIGH RISK OF DYING IN A HOME FIRE

WASHINGTON, D.C. – The Department of Homeland Security's Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) announced today a campaign to raise awareness about the increased risk of fire death for adults 65 and older, and to advise those 50 and older of the risks as they plan ahead and care for older loved ones. The campaign's messages include safe disposal of cigarettes, cooking with care and cautious use of heaters. The campaign, sponsored by FEMA's U.S. Fire Administration, urges Americans to "Prevent Fire. Save Lives."

"People ages 65 and older face a dramatically increased risk of dying in a home fire," said Michael D. Brown, Under Secretary of Homeland Security for Emergency Preparedness and Response. "With America's older population larger than ever and still growing, it's important that we take steps to reduce this public health problem."

From 1989 to 1998, **adults ages 65 and older faced three times the risk** of dying in a home fire compared to the rest of the U.S. population, according to the U.S. Fire Administration. The risk at ages 65 to 74 is nearly twice, and it increases to nearly four times for people ages 75 to 84 and to more than five times for people ages 85 and older. From 1989 to 1998, adults 65 and older made up 31 percent of the home fire deaths. During the same decade, 13 percent of home fire deaths were adults between the ages of 50 and 64, which shows how sharply the risk increases after adults reach their mid-60s.

"Smoking, heating and cooking are the causes of most of these fire deaths," said U.S. Fire Administrator R. David Paulison. "This campaign is about alerting people to the risk and letting them know how to reduce it."

A Fire Safety Campaign for People 50-Plus materials include a fire safety fact sheet for people ages 50 and older, print public service announcements in English and Spanish, bookmarks in English and Spanish, and a campaign guide for fire service officials. The fact sheet and campaign fliers are available on the campaign Web site, www.usfa.fema.gov/50Plus. A data report on the fire death rates of people ages 50 and older, consumer-friendly sections around campaign messages and a media section are also posted on the site. Materials can be requested via the Web site.

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On March 1, 2003, FEMA became part of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security. FEMA's continuing mission within the new department is to lead the effort to prepare the nation for all hazards and effectively manage federal response and recovery efforts following any national incident. FEMA also initiates proactive mitigation activities, trains first responders, administers the National Flood Insurance Program and operates the U.S. Fire Administration.

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